

Playing her own tune

Juliana Hatfield reads from her new memoir.

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Juliana Hatfield is the anti-rock star.

Hatfield was at the Duxbury Free Library Sunday afternoon to read excerpts from her book "When I Grow Up: A Memoir." The book is no gleeful retelling of groupies conquered and illicit substances consumed, as many rock memoirs are. Instead, the excerpts Hatfield shared with a group of fans, family and friends in the library basement on a rainy Sunday afternoon painted a picture of a deeply introspective woman, uncomfortable with attention but doggedly devoted to her craft.

In one chapter from the book, entitled "Guns & Roses and Me," Hatfield recalls sitting in her hotel room watching the video for her song "My Sister" come on after Gun & Roses's saccharine ballad "November Rain."

"It seemed so bizarre for the two of us to be lumped together," she said. "They believed in their own mythology ... I seemed born not to raise hell but to doubt everything."



Juliana Hatfield performs her song "Shining On" at the Duxbury Free Library Sunday afternoon. Hatfield, who grew up in Duxbury and has had a successful career as a rock musician, read excerpts from her book "When I Grow Up: A Memoir" and took questions from the audience.

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but to doubt everything."

— Juliana Hatfield, reading from "When I Grow Up"

"When I Grow Up" was published in September of 2008.

"The book tells the story of my life in music," Hatfield said.

She regaled the library audience with some excerpts from the book, which she said

in on a few touring rock star secrets, like having to use a plastic cup when there were no backstage bathrooms.

"This maneuver is performed more frequently on tour than the layman might realize," she said.

The book also talks about Hatfield's struggle to mesh her inner shyness (she admitted being nervous before coming out to speak at the library) and the rock n' roll world she loved. In describing a failed relationship with the lead singer of another band, she wrote: "I was entranced. I think I wanted some of James's rock and roll mystique to rub off on me ... I thought I was falling in love with the guy, but really I was falling in love with the sound."

However, the rock and roll lifestyle didn't always match Hatfield's personality.

"At heart I am a librarian, a bird watcher, a gardener, a transcendentalist, a monk," she said. "I want peace and quiet and order ... I want to awake at dawn and drink a cup of tea and listen to the birds."

This dichotomy is often reflected in Hatfield's music, which can range from searching ballads to strident rock anthems.

Hatfield then played a few songs on an acoustic guitar, and even in her performance she was self-deprecating — apologizing for having a cold, and introducing her hit "My Sister" as "a song that was on the radio a long time ago." But she held the audience captive with her inventive guitar playing and her lilting, high-pitched voice. It was obvious where Hatfield felt the most comfortable.

"Where I get the most fulfillment is in the writing," she said. "I always keep coming back to that."

Hatfield, who graduated from Duxbury High School, was born in Maine but moved to Duxbury as a young girl. She attended the Berklee School Of Music in Boston and played bass with the Blake Babies before going solo. Her music catalogue is prolific, including solo albums and collaborations with other artists. Her newest CD, "How to Walk Away" was released in 2008.

was written in bits and pieces, in between tours, over several years.

As a junior at Duxbury High School, she knew her future was in music when she had a vision of herself on stage.

"This mass of humanity was singing along as one with me," she said. "I wasn't dreaming, this was a waking vision, like a crystal ball."

She did let the audience



Hatfield's book was written in snippets over the course of several years, she said. Subjects ranged from backstage antics, memories of growing up in Duxbury, and rock and roll boyfriends to meditations on fame and media exposure.